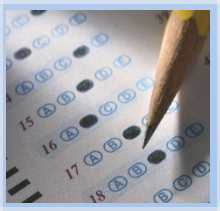
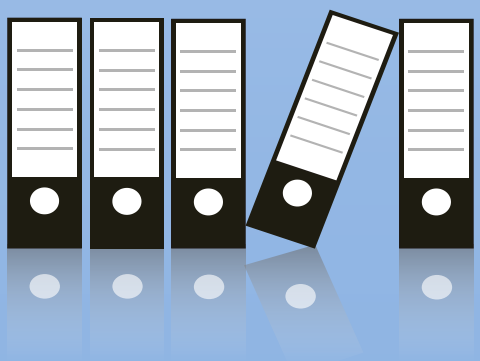
Getting and Maintaining Your Water System Operator License in Texas





American WATER COLLEGE

www.AmericanWaterCollege.org/Texas

Introduction

This guide is intended to be a public service of American Water College. The information provided was obtained from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and is believed to be accurate.

Throughout this resource, we have provided you with links to the source information. We encourage you to utilize these links to the TCEQ website as you work through the process of obtaining or renewing your Texas Water System Operator License.

https://www.tceq.texas.gov/licensing/licenses/waterlic

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Water Operator Licensing Overview

The water treatment industry is a noble profession. If you are reading this guide, you are either already serving in or are considering a career in a field which greatly contributes to the high degree of public health and quality of life we enjoy in this country. This first section gives you a basic overview of the process you can follow to get and maintain your Water System Operator license in the state of Texas.

Texas water operator licensing is governed by the following state regulations:

30 Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Chapter 30, Subchapter K

30 TAC, Chapter 290

Public water system operators who perform process control duties in production or distribution of drinking water must be licensed with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), unless exempt, and musty comply with the requirements in Chapter 290, related to Public Drinking Water.

To become licensed as a public water system operator, an applicant must:

1. Complete the required course training
2. Meet the required education
3. Meet the required experience
4. Complete the TCEQ application
5. Pay the required fee
6. Pass the applicable exam (minimum score of 70%)

American Water College offers **COURSES** to help you meet the training requirements and prepare to pass your licensing exams the first time. Our exam preparation courses cover all the material you need to know. We use a proven system with the most effective training methods so you will go into your exam with the confidence you need to succeed. Click **HERE** to download your FREE copy of **Certification Exam Tips**.

The remainder of this guide outlines the experience and education requirements for you to get and maintain your Water System Operator license.

Class A Requirements

Three Education and Work Experience Options

Master's Degree

- Education: degree major must be in chemistry, biology, engineering, microbiology, bacteriology, or another similar discipline as approved by the TCEQ Executive Director.
- Work Experience: four years of "hands-on" experience in public water system operations.

Bachelor's Degree

- Education: degree major must be in chemistry, biology, engineering, microbiology, bacteriology, or another similar discipline as approved by the TCEQ Executive Director.
- Work Experience: five years of "hands-on" experience in public water system operations.

High School or General Equivalency Diploma

- Education: High School diploma or GED.
- Work Experience: eight years of experience in public water system operations, six of which must be "hands-on".

Acceptable Work Experience Substitute
Applicants with a High School diploma or GED may substitute up to two years of experience with college hours or additional TCEQ approved water operator training.

- ✓ 64 semester hours of college or 80 additional hours of approved training for two years of work experience.
- ✓ 32 semester hours of college or 40 additional hours of approved training for one year of work experience.

Note: For laboratory experience to be fully acceptable towards operator licensing, the laboratory must be owned and operated by the public water system and the laboratory personnel must consult on a daily basis with a public water system's licensed operator personnel.

Class A Requirements (cont.)

Training Courses

Core Courses:

- Basic Waterworks Operation
- Surface Water Production I
- Surface Water Production II
- Groundwater Production
- Water Distribution
- Water Laboratory
- Water Utility Management
- Water Utility Safety

Elective Course:

- An additional 20 hours of training are needed to meet the 184 hour requirement

Application and Examination

Application

- Submit an application and fee to TCEQ
- Receive approval from TCEQ to take the exam

Examination

- Sign up for an exam by contacting Occupational Licensing
- Class A exams are eight hours long
- Exams are offered at the Austin Region or any TWUA regional school that the TCEQ is attending

Class B Requirements

(Surface, Groundwater, and Distribution)

Two Education and Work Experience Options

Bachelor's Degree

- Education: degree major must be in chemistry, biology, engineering, microbiology, bacteriology, or another similar discipline as approved by the TCEQ Executive Director.
- Work Experience: 2.5 years of "hands-on" experience. At least one half of the work experience must be obtained in the specific field for the license that is requested.

High School or General Equivalency Diploma

- Education: High School diploma or GED.
- Work Experience: five years of work experience, three of which must be "hands-on". At least one half of the work experience must be obtained in the specific field for the license that is requested.
  Acceptable Work Experience Substitute
  Applicants with a High School diploma or GED may substitute up to two years of experience with college hours or additional TCEQ approved water operator training.
  - ✓ 64 semester hours of college or 80 additional hours of approved training for two years of work experience.
  - ✓ 32 semester hours of college or 40 additional hours of approved training for one year of work experience.

Note: For laboratory experience to be fully acceptable towards operator licensing, the laboratory must be owned and operated by the public water system and the laboratory personnel must consult on a daily basis with a public water system's licensed operator personnel.

Class B Requirements (cont.)

(Surface, Groundwater, and Distribution)

Training Courses

Class B Surface Water	Class B Groundwater	Class B Distribution
Core • **Basic Water Operations** • Surface Water Production I • Surface Water Production II • **Water Distribution** • **Water Utility Safety** • Water Laboratory • Water Utility Management	**Core** • **Basic Water Operations** • **Groundwater Production** • **Water Distribution** • **Water Utility Safety** • Water Laboratory • Plus one elective course	**Core** • **Basic Water Operations** • **Water Distribution** • **Water Utility Safety** • Pump and Motor Maintenance • Valve and Hydrant Maintenance • Plus one elective course
Electives • None	**Electives** • Water Utility Management • **Water Utility Calculations** • Chlorinator Maintenance • Pump and Motor Maintenance • Valve and Hydrant Maintenance	**Electives** • Water Utility Management • **Water Utility Calculations** • Chlorinator Maintenance • Water Laboratory

Application and Examination

Application

- Submit an application and fee to TCEQ
- Receive approval from TCEQ to take the exam

Examination

- Sign up for an exam by contacting TCEQ regional office or your local computer-based testing center

Class C Requirements

(Surface, Groundwater, and Distribution)

Education and Work Experience Requirements

- Education: High School diploma or GED.
- Work Experience: two years of work experience, one of which must be "hands-on". At least one half of the work experience must be obtained in the specific field for the license that is requested.

  Acceptable Work Experience Substitute

  Applicants with a High School diploma or GED may substitute up to two years of experience with college hours or additional TCEQ approved water operator training.
  - ✓ 32 semester hours of college or 40 additional hours of approved training for one year of work experience.
  - ✓ 16 semester hours of college or 20 additional hours of approved training for six months of work experience.

Note: For laboratory experience to be fully acceptable towards operator licensing, the laboratory must be owned and operated by the public water system and the laboratory personnel must consult on a daily basis with a public water system's licensed operator personnel.

Class C Requirements (cont.)

(Surface, Groundwater, and Distribution)

Training Courses

Class C Surface Water	Class C Groundwater	Class C Distribution
Core • Basic Water Operations • Surface Water Production I • Surface Water Production II **Electives** • None	**Core** • Basic Water Operations • Groundwater Production • Plus one elective course **Electives** • Water Distribution • Water Laboratory • Water Utility Safety • Water Utility Calculations • Chlorinator Maintenance • Pump and Motor Maintenance • Valve and Hydrant Maintenance	**Core** • Basic Water Operations • Water Distribution • Plus one elective course **Electives** • Water Laboratory • Water Utility Safety • Water Utility Calculations • Chlorinator Maintenance • Pump and Motor Maintenance • Valve and Hydrant Maintenance

Application and Examination

Application

- Submit an application and fee to TCEQ
- Receive approval from TCEQ to take the exam

Examination

- Sign up for an exam by contacting TCEQ regional office or your local computer-based testing center

Class D Requirements

(Surface, Groundwater, and Distribution)

Education and Work Experience Requirements

- Education: High School diploma or GED.
- Work Experience: No work experience requirements

Training Course

- **Basic Water Operations**

Application and Examination

Application

- **Submit an application** and fee to TCEQ
- Receive approval from TCEQ to take the exam

Examination

- Sign up for an exam by contacting **TCEQ regional office** or your local **computer-based testing** center

Licensing Exemptions

Texas Administrative Code (30 TAC §30.402)

(a) An individual who performs process control duties in production or distribution of drinking water for a transient non-community water system as defined in §290.38(77) of this title (relating to Definitions), is exempt from the licensing requirements of this subchapter, if the source water for the water system is purchased treated water or groundwater that is not under the direct influence of surface water.

(b) An operator-in-training under the direct supervision of a licensed public water system operator is exempt from the licensing requirements of this subchapter.

(c) A military operator-in-training under the direct supervision of a licensed public water system operator is exempt from the licensing requirements of this subchapter for the purpose of collecting microbiological samples or determining disinfection residuals at military facilities' water distribution systems. The military operator-in-training is not exempt from the licensing requirements of this subchapter for the purpose of performing any other process control duties in the distribution or treatment facilities of a public water system.

(d) An individual who holds a groundwater or surface water license may perform duties relating to the operation and maintenance of drinking water production, purchased water, and water distribution systems and is not required to hold a distribution license.

Verifying Experience

Unacceptable Experience

Experience will not count for:

- Support personnel (unless they conduct routine, on-site operational activities for a public water system): secretaries, utility relations staff, meter readers, radio dispatchers, and bookkeepers.
- Administrative officials (unless they conduct routine, on-site operational activities for a public water system): mayors, city managers, and utility board members.

Verifying Experience

References may be required with the application for individuals who are involved with routine, on-site operation of a public water system.

The following are **NOT ACCEPTABLE** references (unless they conduct routine, on-site operational activities for a public water system):

- Secretaries
- Utility relations staff
- Meter readers
- Radio dispatchers
- Bookkeepers
- Mayors
- City managers
- Utility board members

Continuing Education

Requirements

All Water Licenses require 30 hours of Continuing Education (CE) to be eligible for renewal. CE hours are given for successful completion of TCEQ approved training courses.

CE hours must be acquired prior to the expiration of the license and may be obtained any time during the validity of the license. A & B water operators may complete a self-attestation form as verification of the completion of the CE requirement for renewal of a license.

Search the **License Information** webpage to view current CE hours earned.

License Renewal

Requirements

Occupational licenses are valid for three years then must be renewed with TCEQ. Renewal applicants must have completed the required CE requirements, submit a renewal application and criminal history attestation, and pay the renewal fee. Detailed information can be found on the **renewal** webpage.

Water Operator Renewal Exceptions:

- Class A and B operators may not apply the "Basic Water" course, or any course that is equivalent to Basic Water, for renewal credit hours.
- Class D licenses are not renewable for licensed operators:
  - ✓ at groundwater treatment systems of 250 connections or more;
  - ✓ at groundwater treatment systems serving a population of 750 or more;
  - ✓ at surface water treatment systems;
  - ✓ at groundwater systems under the influence of surface water;
  - ✓ who are supervisors, crew chiefs, or foremen of distribution systems that have over 250 connections; or
  - ✓ who operate multiple groundwater systems and the cumulative number of connections exceeds 250.